

State of Vermont
Vermont Commission on Women
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Vermont Commission on Women Meeting Minutes
Friday, February 10, 2023 | 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Pavilion Building, 4th floor conference room, 109 State St, Montpelier, VT

Commissioners present:

Kiah Morris (Co-chair) (remotely), Lisa Senecal (Co-chair) (remotely), Hazel Brewster (remotely), Esther Charlestin (remotely), Brenda Churchill, Alex Hilliard, Nancy Kaplan, Wendy Knight (remotely), Annie Mackin (remotely), Ashley Messier (remotely), Kim Nolan

Commissioners absent:

Sarah Mell, Heidi Tringe

Advisors present:

Jillian Scannell, Vermont Works for Women (remotely)
Jessica Barquist, Vermont Network (remotely)
Betsy Hassan, ANA-Vermont (remote)

Guests: Alison Crossley, Office of Rep. Tristan Roberts

Staff: Cary Brown, Ellie Lane

Presiding: Kiah Morris

Recording: Ellie Lane

1. Meeting Called to Order

Meeting called to order at 9:37 a.m.

2. Approval of Meeting Agenda

Motion made by Brenda, seconded by Nancy.
To approve the meeting agenda as submitted.
Unanimously approved, agenda approved.

3. Review Group Agreements

The group took a minute to review the group agreements.

4. Introductions

Cary asked the group to introduce themselves and share a group agreement that resonated with them.

5. Approval of meeting minutes of January 2023

Motion made by Brenda, seconded by Kim.
To approve the January 2023 meeting minutes as submitted.
Unanimously approved, minutes approved.

6. Updates and announcements

Ashley is seeking donations for transitional housing program and shared a list of items needed in the chat. Look out for more information.

Ellie mentioned that there will be another Backlash screening on February 23rd in Essex Jct. and that we'll share future screening details as well.

Cary shared that we've offered the communications position to someone who will start on the 27th.

Cary also shared that our March meeting will be fully online in March.

7. Online harassment, cyberviolence, digital misogyny

VCW co-hosted a screening of Backlash on Tuesday followed by a panel discussion. Cary would like to discuss how VCW can engage in this work and talk about what needs to happen and what VCW can do.

Some of the points raised in the discussion included:

- A commissioner asked about the RAD petition. Cary shared that the petition is asking for changes in laws and resources. Ellie will share the petition in the chat.
- The calls to action including a bigger show of support for those trying to address this in the legislature, supporting the Human Right's Commission's work to address the evere and pervasive standard in hnarassment and discrimination cases, and also added contacting the Vermont Bar Association; there are few attorneys who will take this on unless they can win. How do we move forward in finding someone to do this work?
- Expectation setting around staying for the whole discussion in community and how it felt to have rows of people getting up and leaving.
- Mention of a potential hate speech bill being considered.
- Maybe VCW can work on community conversations about this. Also better understanding obstacles to enforcing existing laws on the books.
- Vermont State Police and the reaction of the head of public safety being incredibly disappointing.
- Incredibly misogynistic and racist comments made by judges to her friends and clients recently and mentioned working with the judiciary on training.

8. Racial Equity Work

Shalini joined the group to discuss systemic and structural racism. She shared a slide presentation with the group.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:22 pm.